

Regarding: HB 5355 AAC An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program
Tuesday, March 2, 2010
Submitted by: Diane E. Dimmock, RDH, MEd

**Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and
Members of the Human Services Committee,**

My name is Diane Dimmock and I am a licensed, registered dental hygienist in the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to you regarding HB 5355.

I support the Establishment of An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP). In the interest of time, I will not repeat much of what others have said or will say in support of this bill. Prior to my retirement 2 ½ years ago, I spent 25 years in the Hartford Public Schools, where I served as the Coordinator of Health Services. I was responsible for both the comprehensive school-based dental program, one of the largest such programs in the country, and the school nursing and clinic services, which include 8 school-based health centers & are staffed by APRN's – nurse practitioners. In my 25 years with the school district, I saw the advent of the nurse practitioner and the positive impact that model of provider have had on the provision of health care for our students. Public Health Dentistry is in need of such a provider model – specifically the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner. This mid-level provider will be well-educated and expertly trained to be able to diagnose and treat much of what is seen daily in virtually all public health dental facilities. Having an ADHP to manage the most common and least complex dental procedures will allow the dentists to focus primarily on those complex procedures that require the additional education and training of a dentist. When I worked in the school-based dental clinics, I routinely saw small lesions grow into large ones, and what could have been a simple procedure too often became a pulpotomy or even an extraction – all due to the inability of the few dentists we had on board to “get to” all the kids – prioritization meant that the most severe decay had to be treated first and the smaller, less severe decay had to wait. Despite the fact that Connecticut does have many dentists, the reality is that there are not enough in the safety-net facilities where the problems lie, nor is there any likelihood that this reality will significantly change.

In terms of economics, it is extremely cost-effective to employ nurse practitioners vs. doctors. Similarly, it will be cost-effective to employ ADHP's whose salaries will be comparable to nurse practitioners. According to my documentation in the HPS, 3 years ago, it cost 38% more to employ a dentist than a mid-level provider (nurse practitioner or ADHP). That is significant savings, and these savings translate into increased services for the underserved. This helps to eliminate barriers that currently exist – barriers to care that I would like to see come to an end.

In closing, I would be happy to discuss HB 5355 with you and hope we can expect your support in delivering more access to dental health care for the citizens of Connecticut.

Sincerely,
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